EDITORIALS

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THE VOICE OF BLACK AMERICA SINCE 1892

Missing fathers

It seems as if fathers just don't get the same respect mothers do. Maybe it starts at weddings, when everyone elbows the groom out of the way to get pictures of the blushing bride.

Then again, maybe it starts with childbirth. When everyone pushes the beaming father to one side to coo over the newborn babe and admire the brave mother.

Fathers can't breastfeed, and for some reason, babies seem to prefer the solace of mommy on these sleepless nights. (Actually, any father will honestly admit he doesn't really miss those all-night sessions).

No one ties up the phone lines on Father's Day, or sends tons of candy and flowers to dear old Dad.

And when the camera catches those stellar athletes on TV, how often do you see them say "Hi Dad?"

But, of course, there is a more sobering side to our complaint. It has always been physically and probably emotionally easier for a man to walk away from his child then it is for a mother to abandon her young.

Women have the tests, children come forth from women, and women carry their progeny inside their bellies for months.

Too many black men have recognized those simple rules of nature and have chosen to vote with their feet and flee the responsibilities entailed in rearing the fruit of their loins.

It is all too common to come upon an entire community where there are no permanent fathers present. Someone has helped create the children, but only women can be found.

For all too many black families, life without father is a very real phenomenon.

And we all pay the price for this profound lack of black manhood.

This Father's Day, let us pay real tribute to the heroic men who chose to stay with their families.

Any man can make a baby, but only a real father can raise one.

Cloak of secrecy

If the average man or woman files a false report, or any report for that matter, with the city police department, common policy requires that that report be made a party of the public record.

But in the case of state Sen. Larry Young, the details of his alleged abduction, and the subsequent determination that the claims may have been false, have been shrouded in secrecy.

The Mayor has become involved, the commissioner of police has gotten involved, and the city state's attorney has clamped a lid of secrecy on the whole matter.

Why?

Sen. Young has built a reputation as dedicated, hard-working public official.

And one of the tools of his successful rise in politics has been his ability to work well with the press.

Despite several embarrassing disclosures concerning his lack of a college degree and some questionable campaign financing arrangements, Young still has received largely positive press coverage.

But now, after filing what appears to be a false police report, Young has gone underground.

The main actors in the case are also incommunicado, and members of the 39th District and the city wonder what to make of the flap.

It would serve us all well if Sen. Young does what he has done so well in the past: come clean, admit he may have done wrong, and get on with the business of representing his constituents.

On the other hand, the city police department and the state's attorney's office must be taken to task for hiding the reports and documents connected with the case.

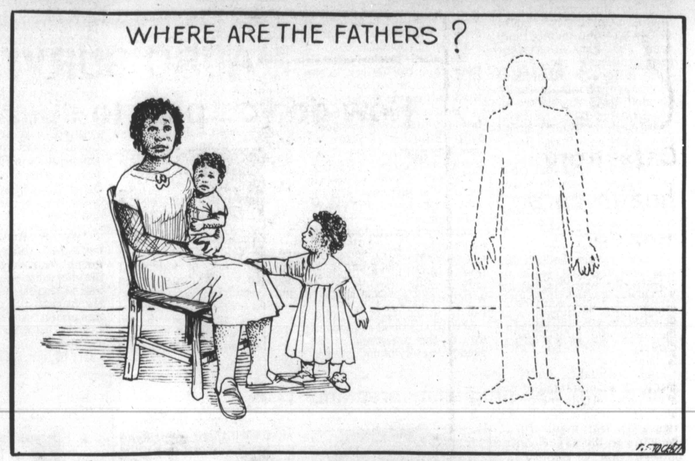
How damaging is the information they are keeping under wraps, and what are the constitutional mandates that allow them to keep this information concealed from the public?

The question once more is simple.

If John Q. Public was involved in a similar scenario, would the mayor, police commissioner and state's attorney work so diligently to keep the details secret?

We doubt it.

The plea we send to all involved is a simple one. Come clean, and let us get on with the business of government and law enforcement, not a policy of concealment and illusion.



LETTERS

Principal praises AFRO

Dear Editor:

Your response to the proposal for a 1988 All Star Academic Team was positive and much appreciated. In fact, I commend the Afro-American Newspaper for its many programs which give support to the youth of our community. You provide a great service and your efforts are supported and recognized by a large number of people.

I hope the All-Star Academic Team will become an Annual Recognition Program which can be expanded through collaboration with the business community to give increased recognition to our academic achievers. Please count on me to assist in any way to encourage our youth.

Thank you.

HILBERT STANLEY

Jesse deserves the nod

I am white, a life long Democrat, and I cast my first vote for Harry Truman in 1948. I was active, with reasonable prominence, in the Civil Rights Movement during the late 50's and throughout the 60's.

If the Democratic Party does not offer the Vice-Presidential spot to Jesse Jackson, they have committed a fraud and the Party is a fraud.

In the unlikely event the position is offered to Jackson and he does not accept, he has "sold out."

The nation needs Jackson on the ticket now, not 4 or 8 years from now. He has earned it and the Democratic Party knows it.

The entire nation will know that the Party is a fraud and really does not believe in Civil Rights, Equal Rights or anything else it has preached with a loud voice since 1954.

Incidentally, I agree with only about a half of what Jackson says and takes a position on. That is not the point!

Where are the voices of Mikulski, Sarbanes, Bradley, Goode, Berry and Coretta King and "Atlanta Clique" etc.?

Strangely, silent, would you not agree?

What are they going to do, offer Jackson a cabinet post? What is new about that?

Kennedy and Speaker O'Neill and the rest of the Northeast crowd, also remain silent.

I guess the "right" is correct in the characterization of "limousine liberals."

Win or lose, the Democratic Party has lost without Jackson on the ticket.

Fraud — Fraud — Fraud

A Democrat
(Hopefully, an honest one)

Here they are again

Here they are again, attempting to use the Summit in Moscow as a smoke screen telling the Russians to improve upon their human-rights record.

But not one word was printed about the human-rights record of two of America's allies, the terrorist states of the Union of South Africa and Israel. South Africa subjugates millions of 'black' South Africans and Israel continues to deny thousands of Arabs a homeland.

We state that more stringent sanctions against South Africa would only mean that more 'black' South Africans would suffer and lose jobs and that South Africa helps the so-called free world contain communism. Further it is stated that Cuban and Russian troops are still in Angola, preventing a complete pull-out of South African troops from Namibia.

The Israeli policy concludes that its homeland will be safe only by keeping its troops on duty occupying Arab lands and maintaining refugee camps. These people like the 'black' South Africans would like a taste of freedom and self-determination.

Without analyzing the two policies closely, it may seem reasonable, but a second thought only confirms a widely known fact, that freedom and human-rights are not considered when the victims of oppression are any of the world's non-whites.

Hopefully, with a new administration coming on the scene in January, freedom and human-rights for all people, regardless of skin color, may finally get America's prestige behind a sincere effort to bring these about.

BERNARD TUTSON, II
Rockville, Maryland

DeWayne Wickham

Baltimore-style racism

"Show me how much a man will endure," a philosopher once groused, "and I'll show you how much he will suffer."

For nearly a month now there has been a 24-hour police guard on the residence of Eric Boyce-Bey. One officer is stationed at the front door of the home in this city's Hampden section and another stands in the alley, just to the rear of the house into which Boyce-Bey, his wife and three children moved last month. They are there to protect this black family from their white neighbors.

Two days after the Boyce-Beys moved into this nearly all-white neighborhood in the shadow of Johns Hopkins University they were greeted by the only welcoming committee they have yet to encounter in Hampden. Like the Klansmen who once terrorized southern blacks, these people came in the dead of night. And like the hooded bigots they too were bent upon violence.

According to police reports the nocturnal visitors hurled rocks through the windows of the Boyce-Bey's home. Outside, one of the attackers was heard to yell, "Die n——rs." But it was not until police got wind of a bomb threat against the black family that officers were stationed outside the narrow rowhouse in the blue-collar community.

It's hard to imagine that such an overt act of racism would occur in a city nearly 60 percent black. Harder yet to understand is the way blacks and whites here reacted to the incident.

There were no protest marches of the kind blacks mounted in New York in 1968 after one of three blacks who wandered into the white neighborhood of Howard Beach was struck by a car and killed while fleeing a gang of white thugs who attacked the men with tree branches and a baseball bat.

No interracial coalition massed to walk through Hampden as blacks and whites did two years ago to protest racial prejudice in Forsyth County, Georgia. No expressions of remorse have been offered the Boyce-Bey family by Hampden whites. And few elected officials, black or white, have visited with the black family or offered any public criticism of the Hampden community.

Hampden residents, some of whom profess disdain for the violence, make little secret of their desire to keep blacks out of the white enclave. A few Hampden whites have been subpoenaed by a federal grand jury that is looking into the attacks and threats against the Boyce-Bey family. Aside from this probe and the 24-hour police guard there seems to be little public interest in the black family's plight.

People in this city apparently are willing to patiently "endure" and quietly "suffer" Hampden's racism.

Not so the good people of Cranston, Rhode Island!

Last week Michele and Charles Berkley awoke to find their car vandalized and their home and sidewalk in this Providence suburb defaced by spray-paint. The vandalism did not come without warning. Both the previous owner of the Berkley's house and the real estate agent who handled the sale reportedly were threatened by residents who objected to the black family's move into Cranston. The head of the state's Commission Against Racism was quick to charge that the black family had been victimized by a racial attack.

Almost immediately residents of this overwhelmingly-white community began to respond. Whites who were barely known to the Berkleys showed up at their door bearing flowers, food, money and expressions of regret. Charles Berkley's employer sent a contractor to clean the spray-paint from the family's house. A city work crew sandblasted the graffiti from their sidewalk.

"We just want to tell you that what people did to your home is a disgrace," a third-grade student from Johnston, R.I., wrote the Berkley family. She was one of scores of schoolchildren — most of them white — who sent letters of support.

"We even got letters from kids at a day care center in Providence," Michelle Berkley said. "Of the hundreds of calls we received, not one of them was negative." In fact she said people — in this state with only a three percent black population — came from towns as far away as 30 miles to offer words of encouragement.

Politicians in droves made their way to the Berkley home, but it was just the ordinary people who made the greatest impressions with the black family that moved to Cranston last month — just about the same time the Boyce-Bey family took up residence in Baltimore's Hampden neighborhood.

"Many of them would hug us. They were crying. It was very touching," Michele Berkley admitted.

In this case the people of Cranston have shown themselves to have a low tolerance for overt displays of racism. They wasted no time in making it clear that there is little they are willing to "endure" or "suffer" when it comes to acts of racial bigotry.

Not so the good people of Baltimore!

DeWayne Wickham's column is syndicated nationally by the Gannett News Service.

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COMMENTARY & OPINIONS

Kweisi Mfume
U.S. Congressman

Catastrophic health care needed

The possibility of being stricken with arthritis, Alzheimer's Disease, osteoporosis, cancer, or some other debilitating ailment puts fear into the hearts and minds of millions of elderly Americans and their families.

Such trepidation isn't wrought just from understandable concerns about physical pain and suffering. It also generates from legitimate worries about the financial ruin that catastrophic illness can cause them.

After years of intensive legislative work, Congress has finally approved legislation to protect elderly Americans from catastrophic hospital, doctor, and prescription drug expenses. It signifies the first major expansion of the Medicare program, and will benefit 32 million senior citizens.

The decision to put one's spouse in a nursing home is perhaps one of the most heartwrenching dilemmas with which married senior citizens are sometimes faced.

During hearings, members of Congress were moved to tears by the sagas of those whose reluctant decision to put their spouses in nursing homes eventually led to their own impoverishment.

The catastrophic health care bill would protect against spousal impoverishment by allowing the spouse to keep $750 in monthly income as well as half the couple's assets up to a specified dollar amount.

Since an increased need for prescription medicine is an inevitable part of growing older, a provision dealing with this costly medical expense was a must for any meaningful catastrophic health care legislation.

Accordingly, the bill provides that beginning in 1991, 50 percent of the cost of prescription drugs will be covered after the Medicare recipient pays the first $600. This will increase to 60 percent in 1992 and 80 percent thereafter.

Other key provisions include unlimited free hospital care after the recipient pays the first $564 annually; unlimited free physician care after recipient pays first $1,400 annually on Medicare-approved charges; 150 days a year of care in skilled nursing; 38 days a year of continuous home health care; an 80 hours a week respite benefit for those taking care of an elderly relative at home; and coverage for mammograms.

The passage of the catastrophic health care bill marked a victorious battle in the effort to provide affordable health care to every citizen, but Congress has yet to win the war.

With much of the attention on this issue (logically) focused on the elderly, many people forget that catastrophic illness can strike at any age. Testimony from AIDS patients and the parents of children suffering from crippling ailments are cases in point.

The fact that the approved catastrophic health care bill is self-financing through minimal increases in Medicare premiums and surtaxes brings a sigh of relief to all who are concerned about this nation's huge federal deficit.

It also lends hope to the possibility that, with some modifications, related measures will, in time, receive resounding bipartisan support.

Despite this nation's vast wealth, it is estimated that 37 million citizens are without any health insurance. Many of these people are employed adults who simply cannot afford coverage for themselves and their dependents.

This statistic is inexcusable, and we must use it as the battle cry in the struggle to provide adequate and affordable health care for every American.

AFRO SURVEY

How do you plan to spend summer?

MICHELLE HOLDCLAW, 24, security guard. I am just going to be working. I go to the Harbor every weekend to eat the good food.

Michelle Holdclaw

THOMAS ROUSE, 77, retired. Nothing! I'm not going to do anything. Maybe, come down to Lexington Market and get a little breakfast in the morning.

Thomas Rouse

MARC BLOWE, 27, state employee. My plans are to work and go to the beach; Greenbriar and Ocean City—maybe take a little vacation down to Florida.

Marc Blowe

SHAWN YINNOURISE, 19, hotel employee. Beside working, I am planning to go to Cyprus, Greece. My husband is Greek, and I've never met his family. There are a lot of beaches there, so, I'm sure we'll visit some of them.

Shawn Yinnourise

Anthony Armstrong
Political Consultant

Hybrid Ideas

THERE ARE other and better solutions to the kinds of problems that cause the direct and indirect involvement in the illegal drug businesss; and those solutions do not include anything that comes close to legalizing, decriminalizing, or anything resembling either of those unworkable, and almost inhuman and morally criminal solutions.

Unlike the flash-in-the-news solutions that have recently been suggested, there are solutions to the drug problem that do not require more destruction of life.

In reality, people don't get involved with the drug game because they want to destroy life; they get involved in it because they want to make money - just like any other businessman.

Yet, just as spoiled fruit that must be thrown away is part of the produce business, violence that must be answered by more violence is part of the drug game; both are the cost of doing business.

Attempting to decriminalize drugs (and this play on words is just that - play - effectively, decriminalizing drugs means making them legal) does nothing for the real problem of people who need money, and feel that other avenues for getting it are closed.

If the authorities, or an individual who represents such authority, like a mayor, wants to deal with the problem of drugs they had better provide other means for people to get money.

I don't mean minimum wage jobs either.

What is necessary are numerous vehicles by which people can amass appreciable amounts of money.

"After all, or so the feeling goes, "if everybody we're suppose to emulate has all the things that money can buy, why shouldn't we?

Furthermore, many of those people - business leaders, politicians, those with education, even those that just work hard for a living - got what they have through less than legal means; or if not illegally, at least they got what they have by being "wired-in" to the system.

What about all those people who are not wired-in, are they just suppose to watch the others and want?

To ask people to constantly be on the outside looking in, without any real hope or means or even getting in is an invitation to have your windows broken.

To ask people to live in America where they see other people driving expensive cars, living seemingly completely leisurely lives, and doing so just because they haven't been caught yet; to ask people to see all this and not want it too is totally without regard to human nature.

The problem for the legalization addicts is a simple one: they don't want to see some uneducated slob with the same things they, with their educations and air conditioned BMW's have.

They feel, as our increasingly questionable mayor has stated, that, "the profit ought to be taken out of the drug game". The question, however, is, "taken out for who", the individual or the state. It sounds like the numbers game all over again.

If anyone is serious about solving the drug problem what they had better do is devise more creative solutions than just advocating that the state become the drug dealer.

Any street wise person - dealer or not - can see through such nonsense as clearly as you or I can see through a spotless glass window.

Again, it's not the profits that bother such people, it's who's getting the profits that really ticks them off. No, I don't advocate selling illegal drugs; but neither do I advocate a whole generation of people having no other opportunity for getting the kind of money possible through the sale of drugs.

There are other ways, but those ways require a commitment from the haves in society that they, heretofore, have not been willing to make. That's understandable, because the haves in America have always spent most of their time trying to make sure the have nots remain have nots.

Well, the have nots have had it; enough, they say, enough of this always looking and wanting and not being able to have.

The have nots have found some economic viability in the selling of a product almost everyone seems to want - drugs. It's the American way: find a need and fill it. If the legalization addicts want people to stop their illegal behavior they had better get behind some solutions that provide alternative ways of people to make money legally.

The solutions are there, but they demand a commitment and a sharing that many people aren't willing to buy into. The interesting thing here is that those same people who don't want to see a drug dealer make any money are often the same people who advocate giving money to their friends for things that don't require anymore effort than signing their names to a contract to provide a product or service, that they get the chance to provide simply because they know the right people. I ask you, "who's the gangster"?

In a second commentary I'll suggest a plan that could replace the lure of selling drugs with a broad based effort designed to answer the root causes of the drug problems, which, of course, is money.

Yet, since when has it been looked upon as negative in America to want money, and further, to get that money by whatever means available.

Look at the cigarette boys, selling their cancer for money. Look at the Japanese company that is making truck loads of money selling a little toy called a Samarai, that will turn over as easily as a child's wooden toy truck.

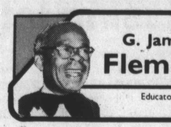
Look at the small grocer in your neighborhood, who repeatedly tries to sell you bad meat, and at premium prices. In fact, just look at a city government that takes more money (from the poorest people in the state) for taxes than any other sub-division in the state.

In return for which we don't get public grasses cut, don't even get a fair public education for kids, get little in way of improving housing - I could go on and on.

The answer is not legalizing drugs; the answer is providing opportunity to people who simply have not had much opportunity. The trade off is a simple enough proposition: provide real opportunity in exchange for real death. The tragedy is so clear.

Rather then provide the opportunity, too many people wish only to stop the flow of money to certain individuals.

They haven't stopped to ask themselves what your family is going to do without the alternatives that people like you have developed for themselves. No, no hybrid ideas, just no money.



G. James Fleming
Educator

Are our schools that bad?

Can anything good be found in America's public schools?

Not from all that is usually said and written about them, especially about the schools in urban areas.

Just the same, however; out of these schools are coming scores upon scores of Asian young people who are graduating at the head of their classes, achieving the highest marks, and winning the most lucrative scholarships to the most prestigious universities.

These Asian-Americans, for the most part, have not been students at private or "prep" schools; they have been enrolled in the public schools of their cities wherever they live.

They have been exposed to whatever these schools and their teachers have to offer. Nevertheless, they rise to the top, achieving excellence above the white as well as their black fellow-students.

These Asian students say to us, by example, that there must be some effective teaching being done in public schools and there must be some good teachers, despite the bad "rap" that public schools are subjected to these days.

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None of the foregoing is new, but this true story was told again, the other day, on the Oprah Winfrey Show, with Asian children and parents present to give their side of the story.

Why are Asian children doing better than most native-born Americans in high school and, later, in college? Why are they doing better than their black fellow-students? Why are Asian students notably superior in mathematics and science?

The answer is that Asian fathers and mothers — Asian families — consider education the most important thing for their young ones and commit all their energies to further that endeavor, so said the witnesses.

Besides, Asian fathers and mothers are really the heads of their families; they set the rules; and are not afraid to lay down some "Thou shall nots"; and they consider themselves co-partners with their children's schools.

Whether or not to do homework regularly, and to put in long hours reading and studying, is never negotiable.

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Some young blacks on Oprah's show gave the usual reasons for failure of black students to achieve; the necessity for black students to work after school, and the lack of parental supervision due to one reason or another.

One black member of the audience admitted that the disparity in the achievement rate of blacks and Asians is due to "cultural differences." He said words to the effect that "Black high school students think most about the latest in clothes and shoes, how they look, rather than how well they are doing in school."

Since Asians and black students attend the same classes and are taught by the same teachers, the difference in achievement must be laid where it belongs. Not at the schools or the teachers but, the difference in commitment between blacks and Asians — between black families and Asian families.

Some public school systems may need to be panned but, by and large, the public schools of the nation are doing their job better than they get credit for.